2:Carrasco E-4, 5 (1945)1952
[EP. 489] NU34 Tarasco NU34
Pátzcuaro

183 as a beggar loses his wealth. He who fails
688 to make a promised pilgrimage dies in an accident. The man who does not pay for the mass he promised Saint Francis is sent back to earth after his death so he will fulfill his pledge.

A number of cases refer to Carácuaro, a place in the Tierra Caliente the Tarascans visit very often, where a famous Christ is venerated. The pilgrim who gets tired on the road and gives up the trip remains behind enchanted on a mountain. The woman who complains about the heat and does not want to go on, and the dancers who danced before they reach the town are punished by being turned to stone.

The punishment of sacrilege is a common theme. The revolutionary colonel who beats the Christ of Carácuaro becomes very sick and cannot die until he asks for pardon. The landowner who tries to dissuade his peons from going to church is burned with his cigarette. The men building a movie house in Pátzcuaro where formerly a church stood are subject to fatal accidents. Sacrilegious behavior of the agraristas is the cause of God's sending the volcano to Parícutin. According to different stories, they destroy a cross, steal the Holy Host, or throw an image of Christ to a bull.

The blessing given by the church is essential. Everything which has not its
[778] approval (blessing) is bad: animals which have been created by the Devil and not by God or the saints, and which consequently have not been blessed — coyotes, snakes, the fish taken from a pool which has not been blessed; money coming from the Devil; and of course the non-baptized.

[773] The same theme occurs in myths. People
[172] who lived before the blessing of the world are bad; their ruins are haunted places and their idols are devils. Enchanted people are devils and have to be blessed by a priest before becoming normal beings.

183 Thus, Tarascan religious ideology and
771 folklore primarily sanction the values of the folk culture. They support the family (understood in terms of local culture), attack witchcraft, defend private property and the proper observance of the folk religion. In their defense of poverty can be seen a defense of the Indian way of life. The money economy imposed from the outside is a disruptive influence in the village community, creating conflict within it or the loss of land to outsiders. The
[776] Devil giving money always appears as a

historical examples of vulcanism within or adjacent to the area. However, vulcanism associated with human ancient settlement in the area, is unquestionably evidenced by the occurrence of charred maize ears embedded in a basaltic lava flow 18 km. northwest of Morelia.[4]

Aside from land forms resulting directly from vulcanism, others caused by depositional processes occur within the Sierra. Between the old composite volcanoes and young cinder cones flattish surfaces have been formed first by ash and cinder fall and later by aeolian and alluvial deposition from surrounding slopes. Such surfaces, which compose only a small percentage of total land area, are the agriculturally important sections of the Sierra. Some form saddles or cols between adjacent hills; the larger plains form basins of interior drainage. The largest basins are Llano Grande, southeast of Charapan; the Plan de Nurío; that of Paracho, Aranza, and Cherán; the plain of Nahuatzen; of Sevina; of Paracho; etc. (map 2; pl. 1). Minor forms include dissected aprons of alluvium and semiconsolidated ash at the base of volcanoes and steep-sided arroyos eroded into alluvium in the upper parts of the basin plains.

One of the most characteristic physical features of the Sierra is the paucity of perennial streams and lakes. Although this is an area of moderate summer precipitation, the porous volcanic surface quickly absorbs most of the available moisture. A few permanent, spring-fed streams occur on the northern and western flanks of Cerro de Patamban and on the western and southern sides of Cerro de Tancítaro. Small springs occur on the flanks of the old composite volcanoes, whose porous rocks form a reservoir of rain water. Such springs afford the sole water supply for many Sierra villages. Only on the edges of the Sierra plateau, at the contact of porous and impervious rock layers, do large springs occur.

The Lake area.—At the eastern edge of the Sierra exists a depression filled by Lake Pátzcuaro. Sierran geomorphology (young and old volcanic forms) almost surrounds the lake, but predominates on its northern, western, and southern shores. Twelve kilometers south of Pátzcuaro small Lake Zirahuén, within the eastern prong of the Sierra, appears to have been formed by a lava-blocked

[4] An excellent specimen of charred maize so embedded is in the Museo Regional Michoacano, Morelia.

4: West K-5 (1946) 1948 NU34 Tarasco NU34
[p. 34-a]

241 177 The Tarascans, like many aboriginal groups strongly influenced by European culture, engage in two types of agriculture: field agriculture and horticulture. The former comprises extensive cultivation of grains in comparatively large fields with the plow and in small hillside plots with the hoe. Tarascan horticulture includes mainly the intensive cultivation of grains, vegetables, medicinal plants, and fruits in the house-lot gardens (ekuáɾu, sing., ekuáɾueča, pl., hispanicized to *ecuaro*); it also includes specialized truck gardening, such as that practiced on the shores of Lake Pátzcuaro.

FIELD AGRICULTURE AND ASSOCIATED CROPS

241 261 There are three basic native food crops of Mexico: maize (starch and oil), beans (protein), and squash (vegetable vitamin), all of which are now associated with field agriculture. In most Indian and many mestizo communities this complex forms the principal elements in the common diet; the three crops are planted together in the same field, cultivated together in the same manner, and harvested about the same time.

243 [172] **Maize culture.**—The earliest record of maize in the Tarascan area is found in the charred ears encountered in a lava flow 18 km. northwest of Morelia. The date of the flow is unknown, but maize was probably known to the Tarascans when they settled in the Sierra and the northern plateau.

The provenience of maize cultivated by the early Tarascans is but a small part of the complex and obscure movements of corn from a secondary center of origin in southern Mexico or northern Central America.[50] Anderson (1946 a) has described three distinct races of *Zea mays* in central Mexico: (1) the Mexican Pyramidal, centering in the eastern highlands; (2) Mexican Narrow Ear, found in western Mexico, particularly in both cold and hot lands of Jalisco and Nayarit; and (3) Mountain Yellow, a high altitude maize (usually above 7,000 ft.) encountered in purest form in the highlands of western Mexico.[51] Located between

[50] See Mangelsdorf and Cameron (1942) on the hybridization of South American primitive maize and *Tripsicum* in Middle America.

[51] Following is a brief description of the above races as given by Anderson (1946 a, p. 171): (1) Mexican Pyramidal. Ears short, tapering regularly butt to tip; row number high to very high (16-24). Kernels dented and pointed. Color prevailingly white and pale yellow. Plants short, pronounced intervaginal red or purple coloring. Shallow root system, leaves broad and pubescent. Tassels with few or no branches. (2) Mexican Narrow Ear. Ears narrow, long, irregularly long-tapered, compressed at butt. Low row num-

282 438 in the Tarascan area.[153] By the latter part of the 19th century leathercrafts began to decline, and today within the Tarascan area only Nahuatzen (largely mestizo) continues to tan hides and make saddles and other riding equipment.[154] Some Tarascan towns now boast of one or two *zapateros* who make huaraches of imported leather for local consumption. The principal huarache-making centers are now the surrounding mestizo towns: Coeneo, Zacapu, Tinguindín, Los Reyes, Uruapan, Ario de Rosales.

METALCRAFT

325 **Copper work.**—The Tarascans were probably the foremost metallurgists in pre-Columbian Mexico. They worked gold, silver, and copper. The precious metals were formed into ornaments and disks, which the *caltzontzin* stored on the islands in Lake Pátzcuaro; useful objects, such as axes, *coas*, and spearheads, were made of copper (Relación de Michoacán, pp. 104–109, 122–123). Although definite archeological evi- 325 dence is not yet at hand, it is probable that the 172 Tarascans purified native copper and extracted metal from simple oxide ores by smelting (Hendrichs, 1940, p. 327).[155] From cursory inspection of copper artifacts extant in the Museo Regional Michoacano, Morelia, it appears that Tarascans cast copper objects (axheads) in stone molds. After casting, the axes seem to have been further shaped and possibly hardened by hammering.[156] Accidental, rather than deliberate, alloying with tin and zinc probably occurred.

325 316 172 The Tepalcatepec and Balsas Basins contained the ancient copper mines and metallurgical sites. Hendrichs (1940, 1945–46) has described several probable ancient copper mines sites in both the

[153] AGN Tierras, vol. 83, exped. 12; Zavala and Castello, 1939–46, vol. 7, pp. 361–362; AGN Historia, vol. 73, ff. 178–179. The present northern Tarascan towns of Zipiajo, Azajo, Companja, Tatejero, Tirindaro, Naranja, and Teremendo were all producers of shoes and saddles in the latter part of the 18th and in the 19th century.

[154] Beals (1946, p. 44) states that in 1940 one person from Aranza was tanning hides in Cherán. The old men of Ocumicho remember the manufacture of the black "*zapatos de zapuetas*" in their town during the last century. These were sold throughout the Sierra as well as in surrounding mestizo towns.

[155] The Lienzo de Jucutacato, a 16th-century representation of the migration of a people from the Gulf of Mexico into the Tarascan country (where they learned metallurgy) clearly depicts smelting of ore or metal (probably copper) apparently with the aid of charcoal and forced air draft (blowpipes) at the ancient copper center of Jicalán (Jicalán Viejo), 20 km. south of Uruapan.

[156] Microanalysis of Tarascan copperware has not yet been undertaken. Until the results of such analyses are known, it is impossible to make definite statements as to ancient metallurgical methods. Interestingly, the flange shape of the modern Tarascan steel axhead is identical with that of the copper axes found in archeological sites in the Balsas Basin.

325 southern and northern drainages of the lower
172 Balsas (Guerrero). However, the mines of
316 Inguarán in the northern drainage of the lower Balsas in Michoacán were the main source of the metal. Smaller deposits, such as those of Sinagua, were gophered over a wide area. The villages
[438] of La Huacana, Jicalán, Sinagua, and possibly Tzatzio appear to have been the chief pre-Columbian copper refining centers.[157]

325 Needing copper for the manufacture of brass
438 cannon, the Spaniards quickly levied tribute in copper bars on various pueblos in the Balsas and Tepalcatepec Basins. Later, adventurers (in the name of the Crown) took over the native mines
[177] at Inguarán, probably introducing European smelting techniques. The main 16th-century Spanish smelting and refining center was Tzatzio, 10 miles each of Ario. This center was located within pine and oak forests, which afforded raw materials for charcoal, and was near the chief highway from Pátzcuaro to the *tierra caliente*. Copper ore and probably native copper was carried by Indians to Tzatzio from the Inguarán mines, which lay 15 miles to the south (AGN General de Parte, vol. 5, ff. 311–313, 1601). Tzatzio was probably an ancient copper center, and the experienced Tarascan metallurgists were retained by the Spaniards to continue with European methods. Before the end of the 16th century the Spanish Crown had established an *asiento* in the Michoacán copper industry, in order to insure a steady supply of metal for the foundaries in Mexico City.[158] Between 1607 and 1614

---

[157] The Suma de Visitas, ca. 1540, state that the Spaniards exacted tribute of copper bars from La Huacana and Jicalán (Paso y Troncoso, 1905, vol. 1, pp. 123, 294). Moreover, every 20 days 20 Indians of Coyuca carried copper bars to Mexico (ibid., p. 80). Coyuca, located near the confluence of the Balsas and Cutzamala Rivers, may have been a collecting point for small lots of copper refined in various pueblos of the middle Balsas drainage. At the end of the 16th century copper was still being mined, refined, and made into tools at Sinagua (Mus. Nac., leg. 102, Rel. de Cinguacingo). Tzatzio was one of the first Spanish copper smelting centers in the area, and was probably an old Tarascan center as well (AGI Aud. de México, leg. 258). In passing, it should be noted that the old La Huacana was located near the Inguarán mines. In 1759 the town was destroyed by the eruption of Jorullo, and a new settlement, the La Huacana seen on modern maps, was established near Tamacuaro 15 miles west of the old site (AGN Historia, vol. 73, ff. 393-394)

[158] Under the *asiento*, or contract, system, control of various industries was farmed out to private individuals. In the case of the copper industry of Michoacán, administrative control was purchased from the Crown for 6-year periods. The administrator was obliged to furnish the Government a stipulated amount of copper annually at a fixed price. In 1859 an official survey was made of the copper industry in Michoacán. The surveyor recommended that owing to forest depletion around Tzatzio and the consequent difficulty in charcoal supply, refining operations should be moved to Ario, near abundant pine forests (AGI Aud. de Mexico, leg. 258). It is doubtful that this move was made, since in 1607 copper was still being refined at Tzatzio (Zavala and Castello, 1939-46, vol. 6, p. 166).

5: Beals & Carrasco E-5 (1940-1941) 1944
NU34 Tarasco NU34
Sierra Tarascans

puts the ball in play, knocking the ball toward his opponents. If possible, he lifts the ball in the air as it is thus more difficult to stop. If the ball passes the end of the block, the last man of the team nearest that goal must go after it, followed by the other players of his team who are supposed to maintain a constant distance from him. Should all the players of a team have to pass the line at the mouth of a street in order to keep the proper distance, the game is won by the opposing team.

The game may also be played with two balls which are put in play one after another.

The game is played only by boys and unmarried young men in the dry season during the winter. It is said that the reason for this is that the streets are too wet in the rainy season. The game may be played in the fields; in this case lines are drawn to represent the street. The game has almost disappeared and few young persons even know it.

In Charápan the Angáhuan type of game is known. In Chilchota, a former Tarascan town now "mestizoized" and where Tarascan is no longer spoken, a similar game is played during the rainy season at a place called La Mesa where there is turf.

Professor José Corona Nuñez has also described a similar game in the former Tarascan town of Cuitzeo on the lake of the same name.[8] The ball is a piece of burning maguey root, 7 to 10 centimeters in diameter, which burns slowly but stubbornly. The game is played at night and the ball gives off showers of sparks when struck. The opposing teams represent different barrios.

Professor Corona states that several codices show gods playing ball with a sort of stick or racket. He also mentions rock paintings near Queréndaro, Michoacán, showing two ball players with sticks or rackets. Ball players with clubs, playing in an "I"-shaped court, are also shown in a mural recently discovered at Teotihuacan.

Kolt͡s atárakua.[9] This game is a version of *quince* or patolli. A course or track is drawn on the ground or on a board (fig. 4). Two players compete, each with four pieces called *moskúkua*. The players start at two opposing points (A in fig. 4) called *apórun*. The course followed by one player is indicated in the figure. Each piece is advanced in accordance with the score made by throwing four stick dice. The players take turns throwing the dice and moving the pieces. A player may apply the score made in one throw to only one piece.

If a piece comes to rest on the points marked B, it is said to be burned and must be started again at A, but until it is put in play again it must rest at point C, *kurín͡kua* or bonfire. While on the interior part of the course the pieces of the two players will never stop on the same spot, but on the outer part of the

[8] *El Nacional* (September 6, 1942, México, D.F., first section), p. 3.

[9] In Angáhuan the *ra* is often omitted, giving the form *atákua*. The "I" sound only occurs in Tarascan in borrowed words; probably *kolt͡s* is in this category, but its origin is not identified.

11: Boyd H-4, 5 (1953) 1958
NU34 Tarasco NU34

ten of the *Once Pueblos* of pre-Conquest days.

South of La Cañada stretches an elevated area of high mountains which cradle wide and fertile valleys. This is the fabled La Sierra country.

East of La Sierra the land falls away to the lower elevation of the lake country which includes the basins of Lake Cuitzeo and Lake Pátzcuaro. The latter, horseshoe in shape with the curve at the west and the two prongs to the east, has its northern and western shores dotted with Tarascan villages. Within the fastness of the lake lie three important Tarascan islands: Janitzio, an astonishingly enormous rock rising high above the blue expanse, with its picturesque fishing village clinging to one side; Jarácuaro, wide and flat, with its village of hat weavers; and La Pacanda, high and flat, with its farms sitting up above the water's edge.

These areas form the solid nucleus of the Tarascan country, whose people, with surprising vigor, resist outside influences threatening to destroy their traditional way of life.

This is a hilly country with conifers on the highest slopes. The lower hills are starred in the summer rainy season with bright red, clear yellow, and delicate violet wildflowers. Michoacán does not become drab even in the dry season, but rather takes on the colors of old tapestries. Its soil is reddish or saffron, its houses dusty white to deep gray, its roofs brownish red, and its lakes azure blue.

Into this area came the ancestors of the Tarascans sometime between the seventh and twelfth centuries of our era. The German scholar Seler (1908, p. 33), in his interpretation of a questionable sixteenth-century codex called the "Lienzo de Jucutacato," argues that they entered the region in the seventh century, but archaeological evidence does not seem to support such an early date. Certainly by the twelfth century they were located in the Lake Pátzcuaro region, in Zacapu, and in La Sierra at Patamban and Tarecuato (Fig. 1).

In olden days the Tarascans were fierce fighters who, over a period of time, forged an empire which successfully repulsed attacks by Aztec armies. It was their hatred of the Aztecs that

[Text continues on p. 4]